

Helping the Boy on the Farm

Continued from page 4] the first time that my Mother was really a handsome woman. Her face was bronzed with outdoor toil, it is true, but it now appeared lit with a new radiance. The usual wrinkles were hidden in a glow that resembled the soft mellow haze of an Indian summer.

"John," said Mother, "there must be some reason why hired men will not stay on the farm. The reasons they give you for leaving are mere excuses. Have you really ever tried to get to the bottom of it and learn the true cause of their discontent? It may be something that we can afford to remedy. Once remedied, we might have no further trouble. Hired men are human beings, with human instincts, with likes and dislikes, similar to us all. They are influenced and governed by the same things that influence other men. Perhaps, Frank (that referred to me), could go out and get the man's confidence enough to learn what the objection is."

At that I spoke up, for the man had already told me why he was leaving. It seems the night before he had come home late, or rather early in the small hours of the morning. He had driven over twelve miles away to a larger town than our trading post in order to meet with some old pals of his and there had played pocket billiards until the room closed at midnight. This, with the long drive of twelve miles, made it about 2 a. m. when he got home. The next day, of course, he was tired out, and Daddy became impatient at his sluggish movements and reprimanded him. Thereupon, the man got mad and quit.

"There," said Mother, after I had related to them the man's account of the affair, "now we have a clue to the difficulty. The man, like all men, is a social being. He wants the companionship of his friends. He wants some form of pastime and recreation to relieve the monotony of his hard work day in and day out on the farm. In order to get it, he drives twenty-four miles in a night after working all day long."

Then Mother leaned forward, her chin resting in her hands, her eyes looking across the landscape apparently scanning the horizon for some time. Daddy made no reply, but sat studying Mother's face. He seemed to know that Mother was thinking and that she had something more to say.

"So he drove twenty-four miles," said Mother presently "out of sheer hunger for friendship." Her eyes were still resting on the horizon. Finally she turned toward Daddy and spoke more abruptly, "John, did it ever occur to you that it might be a paying investment to fix up a social room where our men could have their recreations at home? Suppose we took the lower granary for that purpose. Suppose we even spent three or four months' wages in buying some of the games and contraptions that men like as furniture for this room. Put in a half dozen chairs, a card table and supply it with some papers and some sporting news magazines." "Nah," said I, "reading stuff wouldn't keep him at home. What he wants is a pair of boxing gloves and a pocket billiard table. Then his friends would come to see him."

"Very well," said Mother, "suppose we got him some boxing gloves and a pocket billiard table. These things would last for some years and their expense would be more than counterbalanced if we could avoid this dreadful time that we have every year to save our crops. Certainly the men would have more energy left for work if they were induced to stay home more. They would retire earlier and get their rest. And I believe also that they would appreciate this to the extent that we might find it to be a good paying investment in the long run."

"Sure Daddy," I butted in, "get a

pocket billiard table and I'll work like a trooper to help pay for it."

"Yes," said Daddy, "I'm afraid your working like a trooper would be at the pocket billiard table instead of in the field. You'd stay up all night playing billiards and you and the man wouldn't be worth your salt the next day."

"No," said Mother, "that wouldn't necessarily follow. We could place restrictions as to the hours for play just as we have to do anyhow. Everything has to be governed by reasonable regulations, even your horses and cows. And the more I think about it, the more I am of the opinion that it ought to be given a trial."

At that Daddy jumped up as if he had been shot out of a cannon and started off on a quick pace for the barn. There he and the hired man has some words, as a result of which the hired man stayed with us from that day until this, or at least up to the time I last heard from home. Returning from the barn, Daddy told me that the hired man had agreed to stay with us on condition that we fix up a game room according to Mother's proposal, and that the man and I were to make over the lower granary for that purpose. We agreed to work at this during the evenings after chores.

In two weeks the trick was done, and not many days later the room was well equipped including my much desired pocket billiard table. We also built a little alcove leading off from the main room in which we placed a comfortable bed, a small rug and a rocking chair. This was to be our man's bedroom where he maintains a little more privacy quite distinct from the larger room where he meets his friends.

And that's how Daddy kept his hired man. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" and the hired man a quitter.

COULDN'T FOOL HIM

C. N. Whitehead, vice president of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway, recently encountered a Katy employee with notions of his own as to how an officer of the road should identify himself. Mr. Whitehead was en route to St. Louis from Texas, his car being attached to the rear of a train that arrived at Parsons at eight o'clock in the morning. He stepped off the car when the train reached Parsons and engaged in conversation with other officials of the road while a couple of cars were being switched out of the train. Completing his conversation he stepped up on the platform of one of the day coaches and started back through the train to his car. When he reached the rear chair car he found the door locked and his further progress blocked. Noticing a negro employee at work cleaning the vestibule between the chair car and the sleeper, Mr. Whitehead rapped on the door and said: "Let me through here, please." The negro turned his head slowly, without stopping his dusting and said: "Who is you?" "I am an officer of the road," replied Mr. Whitehead. "Spects if you all was an officer of dis road, you'd done hab a coach key," responded the negro, without looking up from his dusting. And being without a coach key, Whitehead had to go around.

THE HEIGHT OF GENEROSITY

It was small Isaac's birthday, but no amount of hints had brought forth any suggestion of a celebration. At last he determined to know the worst, and went to his father, demanding:

"Pa, what you going to give me for a birthday present?"

Pa obligingly stopped his work and regarded his offspring beamingly.

"Birthday present? Well, now, what you want for a present? I tell you, Ikey; I'll ask your mother to wash a place on the window so you can see the trolley-cars go by."



"The stock ain't fed yet, Hiram!"

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